ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW
ED002648	N.A.	N.A.	

4. AUTHOR(S): Haney, George E.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Problems and Trends in Migrant Education

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN: ORG. U. S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education; CITY, STATE: Washington, D.C.

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Wash., D.C.

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	7/63	3

TELE. EXT. INST/LOC CODE

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE: YES ☒ NO ☐

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TYPE OF REPORT: PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☐ FINAL ☒ FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

migrant education	attendance patterns	poor achievement	summer programs
seasonal impact	disadvantaged	migrant workers	parents' attitudes
teachers	school transfer	placement	migrant children
			school attendance

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Children of migrant workers enter school late, have poor attendance patterns, show slow progress, and drop out early. They are the most educationally deprived group of children in the country. These children have become a critical national problem, since lack of an elementary education can condemn them to a life of ignorance, poverty, and dependence. Retardation is related to a lack of opportunity for school attendance and not to a lack of ability or intelligence.

Providing for the education of migrant children during the academic year creates such problems as school finance, transfer records, grade placement, and provision of teachers and school facilities. Poor attendance after enrollment is a product of the parents' lack of education and indifference toward it, the need for school-aged children to remain at home to care for younger children, the need for the earnings of children, and the language barrier in certain areas.

Variations in school districts and states in textbooks, curriculums, and programs make it difficult to provide migrant children with a continuous and sequential educational program. The use of short-term units in basic skills has been proposed to provide a more continuous program of study and to avoid duplications and omissions in the educational programs. In states where summer programs have been developed, remarkable gains in achievement have been noted.

Progressive leadership is being exercised at the local, state, and Federal levels to improve education for migratory children. Research and study are being stimulated by increased public awareness of the problem. Organization and coordination of educational services are necessary at local and state levels to provide additional opportunities for the children.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

ED002648

OE-20057

Problems and trends in migrant education

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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Reprint

SCHOOL LIFE, *July 1963*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Office of Education

THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL STUDIES
Adams State College of Colorado
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ED002648

GEORGE E. HANEY

Problems and trends in migrant education

Migrant workers and their families

Every year nearly 1 million migrant workers and their families move in three major human streams across the country, from one short-term job to another. The east coast stream—an estimated 500,000 workers, mostly Negroes—begins during the winter months and moves from the southeastern seaboard as far north as New England. The central and Great Plains stream—an estimated 175,000 workers, almost entirely all of Mexican descent—moves up from Texas through the Central States as far north as the Great Lakes. The western stream—more than 100,000 workers chiefly of Mexican descent, originates in California and moves up the coast into Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. (Figures on the movement of workers and the number of workers in each stream are from *Children in Migrant Families*, published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security Administration, Children's Bureau. It is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402).

With some reason the migrants have been called "America's forgotten people." While they are traveling across the country they live and work under conditions of extreme poverty, ignorance, and deprivation. (In 1959 the average migrant earned less than $1,000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.) Because they are not permanent residents of the communities they go through, they are often denied public health, educational, and welfare services. The infant mortality rate among them is estimated to be double that of the country as a whole, and few migrant children have been immunized against diphtheria, whooping cough, or tetanus (*Monthly Labor Review*, vol 85, p. iii).

A migrant's life is no easier if he leaves farmwork. Many migrants have given up their nomadic way of earning a living and settled in northern cities. There many have swelled unemployment, relief, and welfare rolls because they have neither the education nor the skills that most urban jobs require; and their children have increased enrollment in already overcrowded classrooms.

THE MOST EDUCATIONALLY deprived group of children in the Nation—these are the children of our domestic agricultural migratory workers.[1] Most migrant children enter school late, their attendance is poor, their progress is slow, and they drop out early. The result? Most of them are far below the average grade level for their age, their achievement is usually under the fourth grade, and the illiteracy rate among them is high.

The sorry plight of these children has become a critical national problem since illiteracy or lack of an elementary education can condemn them to a life of ignorance, poverty, and dependence on society.

For more than a decade the public has been aware of the plight of these children. In 1951 the President's Commission on Migratory Labor said:

> This Commission wishes to reiterate its conviction that the education of the children of migratory farmworkers (and their parents also) is one of the most urgent and most essential of many steps which the Nation can and should take to improve the lot of migrants who have for so long been deprived of what the rest of us take for granted.

Even though local and State educational agencies have made considerable progress in improving educational programs for these children in the decade since the Commission spoke, recent studies and reports indicate that tens of thousands of migrant children still do not have an opportunity for education equal to that of other American children.

Just how many thousands of migrant children there are is hard to determine because they are on the move so much of the time. In 1954 the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that the number under 18 years old ranged between 175,000 and 225,000. In 1962 in hearings before the Senate subcommittee, the number was put at 150,000.

It is not hard to believe that the vast majority of these migrant children are being denied their birthright. There is ample evidence that they are among the most educationally deprived in the country: surveys and studies by

[1] Hearings Before the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, April 1961. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961, p. 16.

MR. HANEY *is specialist, education for migrant children, in the Office of Education, and a member of the ad hoc committee of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor and the Interdepartmental Committee of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. He has served as teacher, principal, and superintendent of schools in an agricultural community where migrant children were enrolled and for a time was U.S. Government supervisor of Mexican agricultural workers. Mr. Haney was for many years superintendent of schools in Butte, Mont.*

Short units could be developed through experimentation and cooperation among school districts and States along specific migratory routes. Such cooperation would, however, call for interstate agreements, which are hard to obtain. In addition funds would be required for curriculum research and experimentation.

Financing school programs.—It is difficult for some school systems to solve financial problems created by children who cross district and State lines. It is especially difficult for rural schools: "The seasonal impact of these children produces an acute fiscal problem for rural educational systems which, in comparison to urban school systems, already face the most serious handicap in our educational system." [4]

The many problems teachers and administrators face in trying to provide for migrant children has made State action and support necessary in some States. In 1962 nine States were providing financial assistance to school districts for the operation of summer schools. Other States were providing financial assistance to local school districts on the basis of average daily attendance of migratory children at the regular school session. For example, Pennsylvania reimburses the school districts $1 per day per child attending regular sessions, up to 40 days.

Summer programs

Since most migrant children attend school 6 or 7 months during the school year and must adjust to several new schools each year, they are seldom able to earn promotion from grade to grade. Local communities and States have made several notable efforts to provide a more continuous program of education for these children.

Several Northern States are supporting summer session programs to provide migrant children with an opportunity to make up time lost from school. These schools were first organized by voluntary and religious groups in the early 1940's, most of them as experimental pilot projects. But as the schools gave evidence of meeting the migrants' urgent need for education, the States began to assume the responsibility for their operation as early as 1947.

During the summer of 1961, seven States (California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania) were providing financial assistance to school districts for the operation of summer schools for migrant children. In 1962 the State of Washington operated a pilot summer school for them, and Wisconsin operated summer sessions for all children to which they were eligible.

In spite of the fact that classes were held during the summer months when children were not forced to attend and when their wages were needed, the enrollments increased and many children returned the following year. Case studies in several of these States reveal that many children have been able to make up one or more grades of schooling. A 1962 report on the summer program in Oregon says that children who attended regularly for 3 weeks or more made scholastic gains of from 2 to 4 months, that two boys advanced a full grade in reading, and that all made some progress.

It has been estimated that 205 summer schools would be needed for the 20 States using the largest number of migrant workers with children (hearings on S. 1124).

Trends in migrant education

Progressive leadership is being exercised at the local, State, and Federal levels to improve the educational programs for migratory children. Increased public awareness of the need for improvement has stimulated research and study by various educational agencies. The problems of teachers and administrators in trying to provide opportunities for these children have made organization and coordination of educational services necessary at the local and State levels in some States.

Local leadership.—In order to provide for the seasonal impact of large groups of migratory pupils, some districts have organized small classes at the beginning of the school year so that the children can be absorbed without overloading classes. In some districts temporary facilities, such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, and music rooms, are converted into classrooms. Other schools change to double sessions in order to accommodate the migrants. Some districts have employed additional attendance officers to enforce the school attendance and child labor laws. Several districts have made agreements with other districts to transmit information on school transfer records.

State leadership.—In addition to providing financial assistance to districts for migrants' education, several State departments of education have designated staff members to provide leadership on the problem. Three State departments (Colorado, New Jersey, and Oregon) have full-time coordinators of migrants' education. Other States have staff members (mostly elementary supervisors) with divided responsibility for planning and coordinating programs to provide better opportunities for the children.

In at least 28 States, Governor's committees on migratory labor are concerned with housing, wages, transportation, schools, child labor, health, and other measures. Many of these committees have made considerable progress in these vital areas and in promoting correctional State legislation. Legislation for the education of migrant children has been enacted in nine or more States (California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, Ohio,

[4] Subcommittee hearings, p. 9.

records from school to school.[2] It has also been suggested that a clearinghouse be established for the school records of migratory children in the east coast stream.[3]

Grade placement of pupils.—One of the serious obstacles to officials in planning a suitable program for a migrant child is their not knowing the level of his academic achievement and the grade in which he should be placed to enable him to progress and benefit the most from his educational experience. When a migrant does not bring a record from the previous schools he has attended, an evaluation can be made on the basis of such factors as his chronological age, achievement, reading ability, physical maturity, and social adjustment. Much time is lost in this procedure by both the pupil and the teacher. If migrant children carried their school records with them, schools could plan suitable programs for them and place them without loss of time and effort.

Providing teachers for migrant children.—One of the critical problems in the education of migrant children is to provide teachers who understand their cultural background and their socioeconomic and educational needs. It is difficult for teachers with overcrowded classrooms to adapt the established curriculum to children who enter school late or to initiate a different program of studies for them. This presents a difficult task to the experienced teacher and an almost impossible problem to the unprepared or inexperienced teacher.

When school districts have an unusually large influx of children, providing teachers as well as classrooms for them may seriously handicap the school program. The children may enter a community in late September or early October, from 2 to 8 weeks after the opening of school. Unless the district has already made plans for them, it may have difficulty in finding qualified teachers to augment the regular staff.

The school attendance problem.—It is estimated that a large number of school-age children do not attend school from the time they leave their home-base State early in April until they return in November or December. The Office survey of seven State programs (1961) found that approximately 50 percent of the migrant children who resided in Ohio and Oregon and 25 to 30 percent of those who resided in Colorado during the regular school sessions never enrolled in school.

A study in Michigan reports that 17 percent of 917 children did not attend school during the year 1956–57. Reports from home-base schools in Florida and Texas reveal that most migrant children arrive at school 2 and 3 months late and leave as much as 6 and 8 weeks before school closes in the spring, and that most of them do not enter school from the time they leave their home base until they return.

The Office survey also revealed a number of reasons why migrant children do not attend school regularly or never enroll during the regular school year. Among the most important are the following: The parents' lack of education or their attitude toward the importance of education for their children; their need for the children's earnings or for older children to care for their younger brothers and sisters while the mother works in the field; and the language barrier in areas where Spanish-speaking migrants are working. Other reasons reported by the survey, though less important, kept children out of school: The communities' attitude of rejection or indifference toward migrants; attendance laws of some communities, which bar transients; failure of local officials to enforce attendance and child labor laws; lack of school facilities to provide for a large influx of migrants; lack of proper food or clothing for children of school age; lack of school transfer records; lack of financial assistance to provide school supplies and facilities for the migrants.

Some communities along the migrants' routes declare "crop vacations" and close schools during the peak of the harvest season so that children can help gather crops. Local children have an opportunity to make up lost time, but migratory pupils do not. They move on to the next community where schools may also be closed for crop vacations.

Need for educational continuity.—The variations between school districts and States in textbooks, curriculums, and programs of study make it difficult to provide migrant children with a continuous and sequential educational program. Different teachers, textbooks, methods of study, and achievement standards confuse and shake the self-confidence of children who may enroll in as many as four or five schools each year. This situation encourages dropouts.

In order to provide more continuity and articulation in the educational program of children on the move, some educators have proposed that short-term units in basic skills be developed for use in both regular and summer sessions. With an outline of such units, the children would have a better opportunity to progress from one unit to another in each school where they enroll. The units would provide a guide to a more continuous program of study and would help avoid duplications and omissions in their educational programs.

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[2] George E. Haney, *Selected State Programs in Migrant Education*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1963. (In press)

[3] U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the U.S. Department of Labor, *Report of East Coast Migratory Labor Conference.*

Federal and State agencies and local school systems report facts too much alike to be questioned. For example:

A 1960 survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that migratory farmworkers 20 years old and older had completed a median of 6.9 years of school compared with 10 years for all Americans in the same age group (*Monthly Labor Review*, vol. 85, p. iii).

A survey paper prepared for the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth says that these children are far below grade level and that their average achievement in school generally is under fourth grade—the minimum standard for literacy.

The Department of Labor says that, among 2,301 migrant children found employed on farms in violation of the child-labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 72 percent were enrolled in grades below the normal level for their ages.

A 1959 study by the Colorado State Department of Education found that 16 percent of all parents surveyed had no formal education, and less than 25 percent had completed only the grades in the first to fourth level.

A 1961 report from New Jersey says "Though complete data are not available, school reports from several States show that possibly as few as 1 in 50 enters high school and fewer than this graduate. Consequently vocational training courses and school guidance services usually offered in the high school are virtually out of reach of these youngsters." (Curtis Gatlin, *The Education of Migrant Children in New Jersey*, Trenton, Department of Labor and Industry, 1960, p. 2.)

The States of Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas and others have made similar studies of the educational achievement of migrant children, and all indicate a high rate of retardation among them. The studies also indicate that they become progressively more retarded, that they fall further behind until they drop out of school in the elementary grades, and that few enroll in high school.

Studies and State surveys have found that migratory pupils are not educationally retarded because they lack intelligence or ability, but because they lack the opportunity to attend school regularly and to receive a continuous program of education.

The schooling of the migrant child is frequently interrupted by movements of his parents from one community to another. Studies indicate that most migrant families do not spend more than 5 months, or at the most 7 months, in any one place. Each time the family moves during the regular school year, the child loses time from school.

Each year these 150,000 children accompany their parents from community to community and from State to State. And each year they confront local and State school authorities with serious educational problems. The high rate of retardation and the low educational attainment of migrant children compound the schools' problems of providing for them. In turn, the inability of some schools to meet these problems contributes to the further retardation of the children.

Problems

Providing for the education of migrant children during the regular school year creates many difficult and complex problems which have many social and economic ramifications. The seasonal impact of migratory children on school systems along the routes creates problems of finance, school transfer records, grade placement of pupils, and provision of teachers and school facilities. There is, in addition, the problem of getting migratory children to enroll and attend school regularly.

Seasonal impact.—In some communities it is not uncommon for the number of school-age children to increase by more than 100 percent during the harvest season. Lack of financial support to provide additional classrooms, teachers, transportation, equipment, textbooks, and supplies often makes them an unacceptable burden. Since the numbers of workers vary greatly from year to year, school officials find it difficult to plan provision for the migratory children who will reside in their community during the harvest season. This presents a most serious problem to officials with restricted budgets. If officials have no assurance of the number, they may decide that expenditures for additional facilities are not economically advisable.

School transfer records.—It is not uncommon for migrant children to be told on arriving home from school at the end of the day that they must immediately get ready to move on to the next community. Since school officials have had no advance information about the children leaving or where they are going, they do not send transfer records along. If the children enter school in the next stop on the road, their new teachers may write to former teachers for transfer record cards. Many children, however, do not reenter schools in other communities while they are on the trek. By the time they arrive at their home base in November, some have forgotten the names or addresses of the schools they attended.

Educators say that many migrant children still do not bring transfer records, and that those they present do not contain sufficient information for grade placement. In 1955 the U.S. Office of Education developed a transfer record form for children to carry from school to school. Several districts have used this form, but because of the difficulties of migrant life and State variations in regulations, it has had limited use. Some communities in California and Colorado have agreements with other communities in and out of their own States to send records by mail when children move.

Although more migrants than formerly are presenting transfer records, a survey of seven State programs found that interstate agreements were needed on the type of information to be supplied and the methods of sending

Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin).

Federal leadership.—Because of the awakened interest in agricultural migrants and their families, national voluntary organizations have requested correctional legislation by the Federal Government. Five migratory labor bills (introduced by Senator Harrison Williams of New Jersey) dealing with child labor, education, health, crew leader regulation, and the creation of a national advisory council to aid migrants were passed by the Senate in the 1st session of the 87th Congress. The education bill would have provided financial assistance to the State and local committees for the education of migrant children during the regular and summer school sessions, for State and interstate planning and coordination, and for pilot projects on the education of adult migrant workers.

The health bill was the only one of the five bills approved by the Congress. It provides Federal grants for the next 3 years to finance clinics and health services for migrants. The clinics are scheduled at times and places accessible to the migrants.

Six migratory labor bills have been introduced in the 88th Congress. One of the bills would provide for improved educational opportunities for migrant agricultural employees and their children.

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